

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 29, 2021

8:05 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Harriet Drummond, Co-Chair
Representative Andi Story, Co-Chair
Representative Tiffany Zulkosky
Representative Grier Hopkins
Representative Mike Prax
Representative Mike Cronk
Representative Ronald Gillham

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :

State Board of Education

Jeffrey Erickson - Unalakleet, Alaska
Keith Hamilton, PhD - Soldotna, Alaska

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

Professional Teaching Practices Commission

Danette Peterson - Fairbanks, Alaska

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

HOUSE BILL NO. 25

"An Act relating to the duties of the state Board of Education and Early Development; relating to statewide standards for instruction in social-emotional learning; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 25

SHORT TITLE: PUBLIC SCHOOLS: SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL LEARNING
SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) HOPKINS

02/18/21	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/8/21
02/18/21	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/18/21	(H)	EDC, STA
03/29/21	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

WITNESS REGISTER

JEFFREY ERICKSON, Appointee
State Board of Education
Unalakleet, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as an appointee to the State Board of Education.

KEITH HAMILTON, PhD, Appointee
State Board of Education
Soldotna, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as an appointee to the State Board of Education.

DANETTE PETERSON, Appointee
Professional Teaching Practices Commission
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as an appointee to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

CHRISTINE HUTCHISON
Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of Dr. Keith Hamilton, appointee to the State Board of Education.

TANIA CLUCAS, Staff
Representative Grier Hopkins
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Reviewed the sectional analysis for HB 25 on behalf of Representative Hopkins, prime sponsor.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:05:21 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HARRIET DRUMMOND called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:05 a.m. Representatives Story, Cronk, Gilham, Hopkins, Prax, and Drummond were present at the

call to order. Representative Zulkosky joined via teleconference as the meeting was in progress.

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S):
State Board of Education
Professional Teaching Practices Commission

[8:06:00 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND announced that the first order of business would be confirmation hearings for appointees to the State Board of Education and the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

[8:06:48 AM](#)

JEFFREY ERICKSON, Appointee, State Board of Education, stated that he grew up in Unalakleet, Alaska, his parents having moved there in 1964. He followed in the footsteps of his parents, both teachers, and taught from 1987 to 1997. After leaving teaching to care for his mother, he worked in a Head Start program for six years and served on the Bering Strait School District (BSSD) Board. He later worked as the student activities director for the district until retiring in 2019. He mentioned that the youngest of his five sons suffers from severe autism and that he is familiar with special education, both at the local and state levels. He hoped that his 30-plus years of experience would help him to serve on the state board effectively.

[8:08:53 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked about how Mr. Erickson's other experience, including his time on the Bering Sea Fishery Advisory Board, Unalakleet Valley Electric Cooperative Board, and the Rural Alaska Community Action Program, Inc. (RurAL CAP) Head Start, will help him to perform on the State Board of Education.

MR. ERICKSON responded that his experience taught him about the processes through which government agencies work, including budgeting and legislative action both on the local and state levels.

[8:10:15 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked what Mr. Erickson hopes to accomplish during his time on the board.

MR. ERICKSON stated that his knowledge of the educational challenges rural Alaskans face would help provide a needed voice for those in rural areas. He noted the importance of legislation on mental health, early literacy, and emotional well-being for those communities.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked for Mr. Erickson's assessment on rural career and technical education (CTE), what districts are offering in that area, and what he would like to see happen.

MR. ERICKSON replied that he is excited for proposed legislation to help improve CTE apprenticeship programs. He stated that the last 13-14 years of his career in the Bering Strait School District gave him a firsthand look at the CTE department. The emerging technologies, including drone aircraft and 3-D printing, incorporated in the CTE programs have been very impactful for rural communities, he explained. He emphasized the importance of these programs.

[8:13:55 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY mentioned that the commissioner of the State of Alaska Department of Education and Early Development has engaged with rural Alaskans and Native leaders on the topic of state tribal education compact schools in education. She asked Mr. Erickson about his familiarity and position on the issue.

MR. ERICKSON stated that, while BSSD currently does not have any, he supports well-managed, culture-based education and compact schools.

[8:15:41 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked Mr. Erickson who and what he taught in the classroom.

MR. ERICKSON answered that he taught primarily seventh- through twelfth-grade science and math. He added that he also taught junior high English, Alaska studies and physical education (PE). He stated that he also coached for 25 years.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked when Mr. Erickson served on the BSSD board.

MR. ERICKSON did not recall the exact date, but believed it was around 2000/2001. He stated that he needed to resign from the board in order to apply for his job as the student activities director.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked about how Mr. Erickson's family colors his perspective on education.

MR. ERICKSON stated that raising his five sons, spaced 18 years apart, gave him a look into many aspects of education. He commended the efforts of his sons' teachers, emphasizing that teachers who held positions over the long term excelled in providing the necessary attention to students. He continued to say that he was very pleased with rural educators. He concluded that he aims to retain and support these educators through the board and the legislature.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked about memorable activities he experienced as a coach and activities director.

MR. ERICKSON brought up Unalakleet's appearance in the state championship game for basketball. He also stated that developing players and teams in volleyball, the Native Youth Olympics, and basketball are his favorite memories.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked Mr. Erickson how working on the front lines during a pandemic has shaped the way he works with kids.

[8:21:15 AM](#)

MR. ERICKSON said that he retired in 2019 so he has not been working with kids firsthand through the pandemic. He stated that watching from afar, he was pleased with BSSD's response which allowed their basketball team to compete in the state tournament. He also praised the perseverance of the students in adapting to the challenges of the previous year.

[8:22:25 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CRONK expressed gratitude for Mr. Erickson's service and stated that he believes Mr. Erickson will be a strong voice for rural Alaska.

[8:22:49 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS noted that many districts are looking to reduce their activities budget which is, in his mind, a

detriment to the students. He asked for Mr. Erickson's thoughts on the skills developed through activities and how Mr. Erickson plans to prioritize them on the board.

MR. ERICKSON agreed with Representative Hopkins' sentiment. He stated that sports and activities provide additional incentive to complete schoolwork and instill confidence in their participants. Cutting back support would create significant problems for communities, he continued. He emphasized that the BSSD board has strongly supported student participation in activities, and that he plans to continue to support it through his work on the state board.

8:25:29 AM

KEITH HAMILTON, PhD, Appointee, State Board of Education, gave a brief summary of his background as an Alaska resident of 20 years. He stated that he has three children, who all attended public schools. He said that he serves as president of the Alaska Christian College (ACC) while his wife serves as the executive director of New Hope Counseling Center. He brought up his 41 years of educational experience in churches and, currently, an accredited college. He added that ACC primarily serves indigenous students, who come in for one of the four accredited, two-year associate degrees offered. He stated that he has served as vice chair on the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) State Board for five years, as a member of the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE) for five years, and as a member of the Alaska State Personnel Board for eight years. He stated that when he was originally appointed, his aim was to serve as a bridge between kindergarten through twelfth-grade (K-12) and the Alaska college system, which seemed to be a natural fit for him. He touted the efforts of DEED and Commissioner Michael Johnson in working toward the goals of Alaska's Education Challenge. He elaborated on his most important belief in education, which is addressing truancy and trauma. He said that, in his experience, "the two Ts" apply especially to students in rural Alaska and that he aims to address these issues statewide as a board member. He said that his Doctorate in Ministry, Youth and Family Ministry Culture may sound strange, but it has helped him understand the variety of cultures in Alaska and how to best serve them. He stated his belief that he is the right person to continue serving on the board.

8:29:28 AM

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked what the keys to overcoming the issues of truancy and trauma are.

DR. HAMILTON stated that those are issues addressed in Alaska's Education Challenge and, while they have received attention, they have not received enough, in his opinion. He elaborated that truancy is often related to factors in a student's home life including lack of food, lack of access to a secure school, and abuse in the home. He stated the importance of a student having a loving and caring teacher in school with them every day. He added that statewide numbers for trauma are off the charts and that it remains a complex issue. He emphasized the need for more funding in counseling to help students address the trauma in their lives. He recalled his experience in ACC where many students would arrive with a history of trauma that needed to be addressed through licensed, professional counselors. He reiterated that additional funding for counseling will help students persevere in their education and it remains essential.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS agreed with Dr. Hamilton's statement.

[8:32:18 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY stated that many people have the opinion that education must focus only on the essentials which, in their mind, are reading, writing, and math. She asked for Dr. Hamilton's thoughts on that sentiment.

DR. HAMILTON stated that many educational issues stem from the trauma in students' lives. He reiterated that if the trauma is not addressed, then students will not succeed in the classroom, no matter the strength of the curriculum or the ability of the teachers.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked how Dr. Hamilton aims to develop the bridge between K-12 and the college system in Alaska.

DR. HAMILTON stated that he helped to develop Alaska's Education Challenge, along with many others. He focused on his role as a college educator, stating that his perspective will provide answers to the questions that DEED has related to helping students transition to college. He added that his perspective is unique and helpful to the board.

[8:35:34 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND stated that flat funding has forced many school districts to cut counseling services in favor of retaining teachers. She added that Dr. Hamilton has experience with overseeing the governor's proposed DEED budget. She asked for his perspective on flat funding, and if he believes he has enough input on funding as a member of the State Board of Education.

DR. HAMILTON replied that flat funding has had a detrimental effect on education. He stated that many other aspects of education are prioritized over counseling in a competition for limited funds. He added that he understands but is still frustrated over these choices and emphasized once again the importance of counseling in addressing truancy and trauma in students. Regarding the governor's DEED budget, he stated that the board receives, reviews, and votes on it each year. However, he added, the board has no power to make changes to it with the current process.

[8:38:40 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY asked Dr. Hamilton to elaborate on his perspective regarding the influence of a student's life outside the classroom on their academic success.

DR. HAMILTON stated that students are expected to have a curriculum that meets their needs, appropriate testing, and teachers that care for them and their needs. He reiterated the importance of counselors in helping students address their issues and feel like they are wanted and supported in their education. He also brought up coaching, and commended Mr. Erickson in his work in Unalakleet as a coach and educator. He added that in his doctoral work it became clear that it requires eight adults, the "circle of eight," to help guide a student in a moral, honest direction through his/her K-12 education.

[8:41:37 AM](#)

DANETTE PETERSON, Appointee, Professional Teaching Practices Commission, thanked Governor Mike Dunleavy for the opportunity to serve on the Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC). She reviewed her background as a Teacher Rights committee member in the Fairbanks Education Association, advising members of the association on professional conduct and negotiating strategies when dealing with administrators and parents. She stated that she sees herself as a mentor to new student teachers. She stated that she also works as a member of

the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) School of Education Accreditation Committee, helping to improve the school through discussion of professional practices. She emphasized the importance of young educators having mentorship in their early careers and that she established a mentorship program for young teachers in Fairbanks through a National Education Association (NEA) early career educator grant. She reiterated the importance of mentors reviewing and discussing professional practices with educators in their early careers. She added that she practiced law for 11 years prior to becoming an educator and that the skills she developed in those years will serve PTPC well.

[8:45:32 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked about Ms. Peterson's thoughts on the role of PTPC in the education system.

MS. PETERSON stated that the role of PTPC is to maintain professional integrity among educators. She emphasized that educators must uphold high standards and provide the best education possible by monitoring, supervising, and regulating themselves just as members of other professions, such as doctors and lawyers, do. She added that in doing so, tough decisions must be made, and educators are in the best position to make them. She stated that she thinks PTPC has a role in discussing policy and practices which are changing rapidly during a pandemic. She expressed hope in retaining some of the best aspects of education that resulted from the pandemic through discussion with educators across the states. She discussed having to balance time in the classroom versus remote learning in her time as a teacher at Hutchison High School in Fairbanks, which is primarily a CTE school. She added that some students who struggled in person have thrived as a result of remote learning. She concluded by emphasizing the need to reach all Alaska students, ensure their success, and not forget the valuable lessons taught by the pandemic.

[8:49:15 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY noted Ms. Peterson's Master's in Reading Education degree and asked what components she considers to be important in a reading program.

MS. PETERSON stated that she is certified in K-12 but specializes in secondary education, where she spent 15 years. She lamented the fact that education focuses on reading at grade

level in the K-3 levels but neglects to provide support for struggling readers after that. She added that it is very difficult to flourish in society without being able to read and that she would like to see programs in high school for struggling readers who are not in special education.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked how PTPC interacts with the State Board of Education in determining which educational aspects should be emphasized.

MS. PETERSON stated that she believes PTPC can ask for information in order to develop policy. She added that PTPC will see a variety of new cases, complaints, and challenges coming forward as a result of the pandemic and new remote learning technology, and that she hopes the board will be able to assist PTPC through them.

CO-CHAIR STORY reiterated the importance of cooperation between boards and committees in education.

8:54:00 AM

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked how Ms. Peterson's roles in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District (FNSBSD), the UAF School of Education, and PTPC will work together to prepare new educators.

MS. PETERSON stated that they go together very nicely, adding that experience as a teacher provides perspective on common pitfalls and misconceptions for young educators. She stated the importance of being proactive in addressing issues such as confidentiality or hostile situations through the mentorship programs. She elaborated on her work with UAF Secondary Education Department Chair Doug Cost in helping improve his department as they move through their accreditation program. She reiterated that her perspective on teacher rights helps identify problem areas for young educators in order to reduce the number of complaints PTPC receives.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS thanked Ms. Peterson and agreed that her three positions provide synergy in her work on PTPC.

8:58:26 AM

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND opened public testimony on the confirmation hearings for governor's appointees to the State Board of Education and the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

[8:58:38 AM](#)

CHRISTINE HUTCHISON stated that Dr. Hamilton provides a worldly view that is much needed in the education system. She noted the success of his program at Alaska Christian College, including the first Alaska Native woman to enroll at a military academy. She added that the Kenai Peninsula has benefited greatly from Dr. Hamilton, as will the State Board of Education.

[9:00:37 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND, after ascertaining that there was no one else who wished to testify, closed public testimony.

[9:00:49 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY stated that the House Education Standing Committee had reviewed the qualifications of the governor's appointees to the State Board of Education and recommends that Jeffrey Erickson and Keith Hamilton be forwarded for consideration by a joint session of the legislature. She said that the House Education Standing Committee had also reviewed the qualifications of the governor's appointee to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission and recommends that Danette Peterson be forwarded for consideration by a joint session of the legislature. She said that this does not reflect intent by any of the members to vote for or against these individuals during any further session for the purposes of confirmation.

[The confirmations were advanced.]

[9:01:29 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 9:01 a.m. to 9:05 a.m.

HB 25-PUBLIC SCHOOLS: SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL LEARNING

[9:05:34 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND announced that the final order of business would be HB 25, "An Act relating to the duties of the state Board of Education and Early Development; relating to statewide standards for instruction in social-emotional learning; and providing for an effective date."

9:05:48 AM

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS, as prime sponsor of HB 25, highlighted the need for social-emotional learning (SEL) for students, including skills such as coping, resiliency, cooperation, and empathy. He highlighted the efforts of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District (MSBSD) and the Anchorage School District (ASD) in developing standards and programs for these skills. He recalled the testimony of a teacher in a House Education Standing Committee meeting from the previous year, where she told the story of her students trying to process the death of one of their peers from suicide. He went on to provide other specific examples of teachers who had helped their students process emotions and return to learning.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS stated that HB 25 does not mandate anything for school districts, as the SEL requirements in the bill fall outside the core curricula mandated by the State of Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (DEED). However, he noted, most districts in the state have some semblance of a standard for SEL. He noted that schools in Fairbanks have received a grant to provide counseling and are observing the results of that pilot program. He noted letters of support from the Alaska Gateway School District (AGSD) and Kenai Peninsula Borough School District (KPBSD), which spoke to the need for SEL standards to be in place statewide.

9:12:58 AM

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS acknowledged concerns from a previous budget subcommittee that the bill could turn into a social program or result in the teaching of religion or anti-religion. He stated that the bill would provide a way for districts to avoid that problem by seeing standards developed by experts and leaders in education adopted at the state level. These standards would provide the districts with proper guidance in order to avoid conflicts. He brought attention to the fiscal note, which supported his position that the standards would be developed by experts in the field, not at the legislative level.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS addressed the question of why the proposed bill should be passed if many districts already have standards in place, stating that industry is asking for these skills. He listed the skills that the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) standards and industry standards have in common, including: working with others; honesty and integrity; pride and productivity in work;

respect for others; responsibility; self-discipline; manners, goal-setting; and problem solving and managing stress. He added that educators also seek these skills, as evidenced by the testimony of Dr. Keith Hamilton in his earlier confirmation hearing. Furthermore, he stated, SEL is the most desired and attended professional development for educators in Alaska as it allows teachers to become better mentors and role models for their students.

He stated further that districts also desire SEL, as shown by the letters of support from AGSD and KPBSD, as well as from the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB). He referred to a presentation in a committee meeting from a previous year by Mark Foster, the former chief financial officer for the Anchorage School District. In that presentation, Mr. Foster pointed out that the strongest indicator for future success in students after school was SEL skills, he stated. He said that pre-kindergarten (pre-K) guidelines for SEL have existed in Alaska since 2008. However, he stated, SEL is practically ignored after kindergarten. He reiterated that SEL is just as important for a graduating 18-year-old as it is for a 5-year-old.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS reminded the committee that HB 25 would mandate nothing for school districts; it simply would provide guidelines for them to create their own programs. The standards created by HB 25 would allow districts to spend their money wisely in creating these programs, he stated. He recalled the earlier testimony of Dr. Keith Hamilton, who found that the greatest issues facing students were trauma and truancy. He said SEL provides the tools necessary to face these issues and continue to learn and develop. He recalled the earlier testimony of Jeffrey Erickson, who touted the benefits of sports and activities in promoting confidence and leadership, and added that those skills should be taught in school and at home as well. He stated that CASEL implementation involves listening to parents to ensure that lessons apply to a student's home life. He reiterated that the bill is essential to student development, recalling public testimony at a FNSBSD Board of Education meeting demanding that students return to school due to a lack of social interaction and progress in SEL. He closed by saying that parents, districts, educators, and industry all demand SEL, and that is why HB 25 was created.

[9:21:35 AM](#)

TANIA CLUCAS, Staff, Representative Grier Hopkins, on behalf of Representative Hopkins, prime sponsor of HB 25, reviewed the

sectional analysis. She began with Section 1, which amends AS 14.07.165(a) to read: "The board shall adopt statewide standards for instruction in social-emotional learning". She continued to Section 4, which would provide an effective date of July 1, 2022. She continued to read from the fiscal note, which showed a total operating cost of \$71,000 for fiscal year 2022 (FY 22). She explained that these costs were associated with 20 educational staff members participating in a year-long development program along with the State Board of Education. The money would provide a stipend as well as a contract from the Department of Education and Early Development to a national SEL organization in order to provide expertise and advice for standards adopted by the state.

MS. CLUCAS presented a diagram for Alaska's Education Challenge outlining standards and objectives for Alaska students. She stated that SEL cultivates safety and well-being and promotes responsible and reflective leaders through self-responsibility and self-assessment. She referenced the previous statement of Representative Hopkins and the presentation of Mark Foster, which both supported SEL in order to increase student success. She explained that these aspects combine to achieve the goal of "an excellent education for every student every day."

MS. CLUCAS explained that the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) does not tell educators how to perform their jobs, but rather cooperates with families, communities, and educators to develop the appropriate social-emotional framework for students. She emphasized that this approach is especially important in Alaska, where the needs of one community may be very different from those of another. She stated that CASEL's collaborative process has been adopted in school districts in Anchorage and Fairbanks, as well as in the Gateway School District of Tok. She noted that CASEL represents just one SEL organization, and the state will not mandate the use of one organization or another, she said. She reiterated that districts would have the flexibility to adopt standards and programs that are most appropriate for them.

MS. CLUCAS continued to a diagram of the CASEL SEL framework, [found in a two-page document in the committee packet], which highlighted five aspects of SEL: social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making, self-management, and self-awareness. She recalled her experience as a manager, where self-awareness and self-management were critical to integrity and addressing issues and mistakes in the workplace. She also recalled her experience as a player and coach in sports where

social awareness helped players identify each other's strengths and weaknesses in order to work together. She emphasized the importance of social awareness in conflict resolution. She highlighted responsible decision-making and stated that, given her background in data, the objective of learning to make a reasoned judgement after analyzing information, data, and facts represents a core value to her.

9:28:33 AM

MS. CLUCAS brought attention to [a 14-page document in the committee packet that shows] the MSBSD standards for SEL [specific to grade levels]. She directed attention to the standards for SEL for pre-K through second-grade [shown on pages 1-3 of the document] and explained that these guidelines are not an added burden for teachers, but rather a complement to their curriculum that already exists. She highlighted a section on student sense of personal responsibility, where students accept that there are positive and negative consequences for their actions. She continued to the Mat-Su standards for SEL in third- through fifth-grade [on pages 4-6 of the document], highlighting the section where students are aware of, and accept, their responsibilities and can define what it means to be responsible and identify things for which they are responsible.

9:31:47 AM

MS. CLUCAS continued to the Mat-Su standards for SEL in sixth-through eighth-grade [on pages 7-9 of the document], highlighting the section where students build on their sense of personal responsibility by identifying the areas of school and life that are within their control. She added that students also learn to analyze the short- and long-term outcomes of safe, risky, and harmful behaviors, as well as define their responsibility. She explained that this ties into a health-related curriculum, as per Mat-Su standards, but there is no mandate to how other districts may decide to present it.

MS. CLUCAS continued to the Mat-Su standards for SEL in ninth-through twelfth-grade [on pages 10-14 of the document], and she talked about students learning to take responsibility for their own choices. She explained that students are able to describe how taking responsibility can lead to personal success and, conversely, how not taking responsibility should lead them to reconsider their actions. She elaborated that students in this stage are learning how to be responsible citizens within their

community by taking volunteer or leadership opportunities, moving into the workforce, or pursuing education.

9:34:06 AM

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS interjected to bring attention to [the top-right portion of] page 11 of the document, and he described the standards listed as follows [original punctuation provided, with some formatting changes]:

- Teen Leadership
- Restorative Circles
- Lunch reflections
- Positive Action
- Kit 1: Life's Big Question: "Who Am I?" Focuses students on who they are and who they want to become.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS explained that these activities can be implemented throughout the day and during lessons.

MS. CLUCAS next directed attention to a 3-page document included in the committee packet provided by the Alaska Process Industry Career Consortium (APICC), which is overseen by the Alaska Safety [Alliance] which works with resource industries and private sector employers. She noted the standards sought after by the alliance, including work attitudes and values. She recalled her managerial experience and seeking to hire employees with "soft skills" because technical skills can be taught. She explained that the terminology is new, given that things change and grow, but it still describes Alaskans with soft skills that employers desire, including reliability, teamwork, and a desire to learn. She reiterated that these are the attributes that Alaska's most significant career development consortium seeks in potential employees, and schools are responding accordingly.

9:36:26 AM

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS noted the APICC Career Readiness packet, which stated "These critical skills, values, and attitudes were identified by CEOs, personnel directors, and other employer representatives, and revised by Alaska's Youth: Ready for Work, following review by parents, educators, students, and other community members". He reiterated that the ideas included in HB 25 come from these entities.

MS. CLUCAS resumed, reiterating the need for employees with good work attitudes and communication and problem-solving skills.

She added that potential employees will also display good work ethic, attendance, and dependability. She referred to a [1-page] flyer from the Alaska Staff Development Network [included in the committee packet], which offered SEL and trauma-engaged professional development, and stated that these courses are some of the most-requested and attended courses that they offer. She stated that HB 25 does not introduce anything that is not already happening and simply introduces standards at the request of the education community.

MS. CLUCAS referenced a 2-page document [included in the committee packet], titled "Alaska Council of School Administrators Joint Position Statements for 2021." She noted that the council requested social, emotional, and mental health above all other non-fiscal priorities. She stated that the council recognizes the need for SEL to be part of the standards and culture of Alaska's schools.

MS. CLUCAS moved on to the letters of support for HB 25, [included in the committee packet], and highlighted a letter from KPBSD, which she stated has "legislative priorities" in SEL and recognizes students' need for it. She emphasized that AGSD Superintendent Scott MacManus has worked with her and other staff on [related legislation] in a previous legislature and stated in his letter of support that his district uses the CASEL 5 framework in its SEL curriculum. She touted the district's innovative approach to the needs of a diverse community and their recognition of the importance of SEL implementation.

MS. CLUCAS referred to the letter of support from AASB, which also supported SEL as a legislative priority. She noted that the association wrote in the letter, "The bill is broad enough to provide districts the latitude to localize SEL to fit the needs of students, families, and communities." She emphasized that the need for SEL is recognized by those in the education field across Alaska. She continued to a letter of support from the All Alaska Pediatric Partnership and noted that, of all people, pediatricians would likely be the ones in tune with the needs of children. She stated that, according to the partnership, the framework and skills developed through SEL are essential for children to be healthy and thrive. She referenced the last letter of support from the Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse and the Alaska Mental Health Board and noted that many students come from backgrounds with many challenges. She explained that the two boards recommend SEL as an essential way to cope and overcome those challenges.

9:43:18 AM

REPRESENTATIVE GILLHAM asked what, given that SEL programs already exist, the bill will actually do.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS responded that HB 25 would give districts the guidelines for going forward. He noted that not all districts have these standards in place, and those that already have programs in place would like specific standards in case they would like to change the programs or find additional resources. He stated that districts want guidelines as they do not have all the answers or the needed resources and time to research them. He emphasized that standards would save districts the resources and time in implementing their programs.

REPRESENTATIVE GILLHAM said that he is confused by the purpose of the bill and asked why districts don't simply copy the standards in place in the Mat-Su and Anchorage School Districts.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS reiterated that the bill does not mandate the standards, but simply lays them out for the districts that would like to use them. He noted that every district has different needs and challenges and just copying and pasting program standards across districts will not serve their needs.

REPRESENTATIVE GILLHAM stated that he has received over a dozen emails in opposition to HB 25 and zero emails in support. The emails stressed the importance of schools teaching reading, writing, and math while leaving mental health to families.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS noted that he has received emails in opposition to grants taken on by the State of Alaska Board of Education for mental health professionals in schools, but none in direct opposition of the bill. He emphasized that the bill does not put any new mental health professionals in schools, but rather provides guidelines, in cooperation with parents, to make sure that the needs of the school are met.

9:47:04 AM

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX noted that soft skills are an interesting subject and an aspirational goal. He stated that in schools in Fairbanks that he attended 40 years ago, schools and teachers were working towards the same goals. He also noted that in his company, each pump station formed its own little community with each crew having a different approach to accomplishing those same goals. He stated that these goals are often addressed

naturally but, in his experience, when they are addressed deliberately it does not work. He predicted that it will be difficult to codify these goals at the state level and direct everybody towards a specific thing instead of letting it develop at the local level. He stated that he would have to think about whether these goals could be properly regulated for local communities and businesses.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS agreed that HB 25 sets an aspirational goal. However, he stated, it does not dictate what must be done and instead provides guidelines for finding appropriate practices for each district or community. He noted that training on how to be a good coworker will not be beneficial for somebody in his/her 40s and 50s, but starting early, from kindergarten through twelfth-grade, will help teach and develop those skills.

[9:51:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GILLHAM asked if HB 25 lays out specific guidelines.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS answered no, it does not provide specific guidelines, but would instead bring together teachers, educators, industry representatives, and medical experts in order to figure out what those standards should look like. He stated that he does not know what those answers would be, as he has never taught in the classroom, and HB 25 would bring together the people who do.

REPRESENTATIVE GILLHAM noted that some districts already have standards and introducing new specifics would take away from individuality.

[9:52:26 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked if the intent of HB 25 is to bring together educators from the community to help develop best practice programs which would then be available to other districts with no program in place.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS noted that there will be invited testimony in a future hearing from AASB and other groups that would work to implement the programs across the state level. He stated that he was unsure of what their discussions would entail but guessed that their approach would be to identify which programs and curricula would be relevant to the needs of Alaska.

He reiterated that the invited testimony would shed more light on what exactly that will look like.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY offered her understand that "this is something that is implemented throughout the school day" via guidelines rather than specific programs.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS replied yes.

[9:54:50 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CRONK asked whether standards, if implemented, would be the same standards used in the state grant program.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS replied no, the \$9.1 million specified under HB 25 would be for mental health practitioners in schools and would not direct how the money must be spent. He stated the bill has more to do with what needs to be done and how staff, from teachers to principals, can work collaboratively to help teach the necessary skills.

[9:55:54 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked if the fiscal note that Representative Hopkins referenced is from a previous iteration of HB 25.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS stated that it is a new fiscal note provided in the previous week and should be included in the bill packet. He noted that the fiscal note was \$30,000 dollars less than the fiscal note for the last iteration of the bill, given that the collaborators would perform their work remotely rather than in person.

[9:56:41 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND announced that HB 25 was held over.

[9:57:11 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:57 a.m.